

PROF. PÁL GREGUSS IS 85 YEARS OLD

Dr. PÁL GREGUSS, Kossuth-Prize Winner, Professor Emeritus of Attila József University, Doctor of Biological Sciences, member of several Hungarian and foreign scientific societies, was eighty-five years old on December 31st 1974. At the celebration arranged in his honour he was warmly greeted by official functionaries, and by his pupils, acquaintances and friends.

In the first part of the celebration, the Rector of the University, Prof. GÉZA FODOR, addressed Professor GREGUSS in the senate-house of the University, presenting him with a letter of congratulation from the Minister of Education, Dr. KÁROLY POLINSZKY:

"Dear Professor,

Please permit me to offer you my sincere congratulations on the occasion of your eighty-fifth birthday. In paying tribute to your course of life and activity, I am greeting not only the Kossuth-Prize winning scientist, but the University professor as well, who has always been widely esteemed, and who enjoys a high reputation in the field of higher education for his exemplary educational work.

I wish you good health and a long life to be spent in delight and happy contentment. Yours sincerely: Dr. KÁROLY POLINSZKY".

Subsequently, in the flower-decorated biological lecture-room of the University a joint session was held in honour of Professor GREGUSS by the Szeged Division of the Hungarian Biological Society, the Biological Committee of Attila József University, and the Biological Committee of the Szeged Division of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The following address was first delivered by Dr. ANDRÁS GARAY, Corresponding Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, President of the Szeged Division of the Hungarian Biological Society:

"Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Professor GREGUSS,

Permit me to greet you in the name of each of the members of the Hungarian Biological Society, whether in Szeged or not, on the occasion of your eighty-fifth birthday.

After being informed that, as President of the Division, I had to deliver some words of greeting, I asked for the advice of several members of our Society as to what I should say in the frame of our good wishes. I felt this enquiry to be my duty as I had to express the congratulations of us all. The first reflection of everybody of course was, to wish you a long life to come rich in work. Following that, our colleagues mentioned the most varied things. Some of them emphasized the professional continuity and stability in your work; others accentuated, quite in contrast, your comprehensiveness and dynamism. I am convinced that both of these opinions are equally true. You have dealt with xylotomy for the sixty-five years of your industrious life, with undiminished energy and the greatest profoundness. This, however, did not prevent you from responding sensitively

to any novelty emerging even in remote fields. Only very rarely does one encounter a researcher capable of harmonizing continuity and devotion to a single subject with dynamism and a broad outlook. Overall, you have succeeded in achieving the harmony of the researcher and pedagogue in your life.

Another considerable aspect was frequently mentioned as well, namely that you have always regarded administration as of secondary importance and given your attention to the essence of the work. I think that this positive characteristic cannot be emphasized sufficiently in a period when so many problems are caused by excessive bureaucracy. I am convinced that beneath this seemingly minor facet a very important feature is concealed, with a gift for seeing the essence.

In expressing the best wishes of every member of the Hungarian Biological Society to you, therefore, I am expressing our gratitude as well, for promoting science considerably in a narrow field, and thereby winning renown for this country. Thanks to your educational activity, our thinking could never be narrowed down to a single line but was able to survey the whole horizon. I wish to express, therefore, the gratitude and congratulations of every member of the Hungarian Biological Society, wishing you a long creative life, and begging you to keep on teaching us in both educational and scientific respects".

Vice-Rector Dr. JÁNOS HEVESI next addressed the professor in the names of the Senate and the Rector of the University:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Professor GREGUSS,

I was honoured with the request of Dr. KÁROLY POLINSZKY, Minister of Education, to read at this session his letter addressed to Professor PÁL GREGUSS. I should like to inform the audience that the Rector of our University has already handed the letter from the Minister to Professor GREGUSS and greeted him in the name of the University Senate as well.

I must end by again congratulating you, Professor GREGUSS, on behalf of the University Senate and in my own name too. I wish you that you may live and work for a long time to come in good health, doing honour to our University, and raising its scientific reputation. We are much indebted to you for your devoted pedagogic activity, and for educating a great number of well-trained teachers for this country. May your further work be accompanied in this area too by good luck and success".

Dr. GÁBOR FARKAS, Corresponding Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Vice-President of the Biological Division of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, delivered the following address:

"Dear Professor GREGUSS,

Allow me to express my sincere best wishes on the occasion of your eighty-fifth birthday, in the names of the Division of Biological Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and of the President of the Division.

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences and, within this, the Division of Biological Sciences have always followed your activity with great attention, interest and high regard, and have professed great esteem for it. Your love for, and devotion to scientific work may, even today, be a model for the young generation of research workers. We wish you to remain in good health a creative member of our scientific life, with similar enthusiasm and for many long years".

Dr. ERZSÉBET S. KÖVES, Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Science of Attila József University, a one-time pupil of Professor GREGUSS, greeted the renowned professor, scientist, teacher, and educator in the name of the Faculty of Science.

Dr. IMRE HORVÁTH, President of the Biological Committee of Attila József University, pupil of Professor Greguss, addressed the celebrated professor as follows:

"Dear Professor GREGUSS,

On the occasion of your eighty-fifth birthday I greet you in the names of the Biological Committee of Attila József University, the Department of Botany and the Botanical Garden and myself, as a one-time pupil.

In the course of a festive address it would be difficult to give an appreciation of your pedagogic and research work of more than sixty years. Permit me, therefore, to mention rather some questions of personal character. Professor GREGUSS has several qualities that are fundamental for achieving scientific results. I shall emphasize only three of these:

The first one: The ability to shape a scientific conception from a comprehensive amount of knowledge. Professor Greguss was capable of doing that nearly sixty years ago, putting forward the conception of the triletic evolutionary theory of the vegetable kingdom. (The phylogeny of sexuality and triphyletic evolution of the landplants.)

The second important quality is hard, consistent work, with no recoil from difficulties. Everybody who knows Professor GREGUSS is fully aware that these are his strong characteristics.

As a third quality I may mention the effective performing of scientific research, including participation in the detailed work, and not only in directing and the evaluation of experimental data collected by other persons. Even at present Professor GREGUSS himself prepares the majority of this sections and photomicrographs.

I don't think it more chance that not only Professor Greguss, but several of his pupils too, have achieved internationally outstanding scientific results. Twenty-five of these are Academicians, Doctors or Candidates in Biological Sciences. At least the same number have obtained [the University] doctorate, many of them being University and College teachers and some of them chairholders and heads of departments.

I myself am proud to be a pupil of Professor Greguss, having made an effort to acquire from him the qualities mentioned a little earlier.

I am very pleased that in spite of his advanced age, Professor Greguss is at present continuing his scientific research work with undiminished energy from day to day, helping those who ask for his advice. I trust that he may work and create among us for many long years to come."

At the end of his words, he handed Professor GREGUSS a memorial chalice in the names of the Department of Botany and the Botanical Garden.

In conclusion, the celebrated professor was greeted with flowers by the representatives of the young people. After the addresses the Chairman, Dr. ANDRÁS GARAY, read aloud the special telegrams and letters of congratulation sent on the occasion of the anniversary of Professor GREGUSS.

Touched by emotion, Professor GREGUSS expressed his thanks for the congratulations, and then summarized the history of his scientific career of approximately seven decades. At the beginning of his speech he said the following:

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I should like to address my first words of thanks to those honouring me by arranging this celebration of my anniversary so generously, without forgetting their one-time colleague, co-worker, and teacher even ten years after my retirement. They may all be convinced that I have not forgotten any of them, either; I remember each of them always and with the old pleasant feelings. For the present commemoration I should like to express my most grateful and sincere thanks.

I have always declared, and do this at present too, that only a dull and self-conceited man disclaims honour and love. In my opinion, apart from health and knowledge, love is the most precious treasure in the world, and love may only be a reward of loving.

Looking at this illustrious meeting, I feel as if I were at a trial by jury where there are barristers and attorneys; with their legal parlance, these have over elaborated the data of my life and activity so far and have tried to justify why they assigned a place to an eighty-five years old teacher at the table of honour and recognition. In their pleadings they magnified my possible virtues and results, but were silent concerning my many faults and errors. I wish to record my best thanks for their kind addresses.

Also here are the members of the jury, our guests, who on the basis of the pleadings of the barristers, will cast their votes as to whether this man of eighty-five has deserved this honouring session, how he has fulfilled his duties, and how useful he could make himself for his country, family, neighbours, and the large number of his pupils. I am grateful to them for their attendance.

Being here myself as the accused, as it were, I ought to avail myself of the privilege of the last word for defending myself. I have a feeling that I should give the reasons for my being here at this trial by jury; that I have to reveal my whole life, showing where I started from, and the very thorny and rugged paths along which I stumbled to attain various high positions, finally at the age of eighty-five, being asked to take a seat at the table of distinction. When, as an interested party, I try to do all this, I must apologize in advance for viewing the events connected with my person in a perhaps somewhat subjective way. However, I should like to demonstrate in this way, mainly for my pupils

and young people, that it is worth while to set ourselves high targets in our early youth and to remain faithful to these even under the worst conditions, till in the end we reach the objects of our lives. I feel fortunate that I have attained most of the ambitions set in the days of my early youth. For that success, I am indebted first of all to the practicability of my aims, to have love of the natural sciences, to my health, and to my always honest work. These have led me during my whole life, giving it beauty and meaning."

Following this, Professor GREGUSS surveyed the course of his life, emphasizing his major scientific results. This part of his address is reported below in a shortened form.

He was born in Torna on December 31st 1889. His father was a village master-joiner with eight children, who worked later as a journeyman-joiner in the carriage and waggon works in Arad. At the beginning, he took part in the work in the joinery of his father, and then, after leaving class 5 of the elementary school with excellent results, attended the grammar-school in Arad. His first teacher in natural history was the botanist GÁBOR PERLAKY, who encouraged his habit of collecting plants. His later teacher, ISTVÁN KRISZTALUSI, already employed him in the laboratory of natural history as a famulus.

After finishing class 5, he had to leave the grammar-school, primarily because of his political attitude. He then went to the teachers' training-school in Arad, where his teacher of natural history was the outstanding botanist Dr. JÁNOS WAGNER.

During the four years (1906—1910) spent in the teachers' training-school in Arad, he was sent by botanist Dr. JÁNOS WAGNER on several occasions for long study-trips in various regions of the country: Retyezát, the Máramaros Mountains, the lower reaches of the Danube, and the environment of the Croatin Plitvice Lakes. He participated in the student-tourist competitions, by describing these trips. He was honourably mentioned for his papers on some occasions. During his 4th year, his paper "An excursion to Lake Balaton" was published in the year-book (1910) for the teachers training-school. At the same time, he became champion in shot-putting, javelin and discus-throwing at the National Junior Athletic Championships in Budapest.

From the teachers' training-school in Arad he was awarded a teacher's diploma (*summa cum laude*) for elementary schools. He next went to Budapest to study in the Higher Elementary School-Teachers' Training College, where the renowned botanist GUSZTÁV MOESZ was his teacher. In his first semester he became professor's assistant and continued his diligent collecting in various regions of the country. With his paper "Diatoms of the Surian mountain lakes" he won the KÁROLY SCHILBERSZKY Millennium Prize of the Society of Natural Sciences. Besides his scientific work, he continued his successful sporting activity. In 1912, he wrote a monograph "A short survey and the present state of phylogenetical theories". Ever since that time, he has dealt intensively with phylogenetic and genetic problems.

In 1913, he was awarded the higher elementary-school teacher's and physical instructor's diploma (*summa cum laude*), and was next admitted to the University of Budapest. In 1914 he became a soldier but, as far as possible, continued to deal with his studies. In 1916, he became assistant to Professor WIECHOWSKY in the Pharmacological Institute of the University of Prague, and in the meantime studied at the Medical Faculty of the University as well.

In 1917, because of his state of health, he was exempted from military service, and appointed assistant teacher in Csáktornya.

In Prague he continued dealing with considerations of evolution, and particularly with the evolutionary history of the vegetable kingdom. Here he wrote his paper "Ein Gedanke zur polyphyletischen Entwicklung der Pflanzenwelt" (1918).

In 1919, he was appointed to the Teachers' Training-School in Budapest, and then to the Higher Elementary-school Teachers' Training College where he worked until 1928. During this period, he wrote about fifteen text-books, approximately forty educational articles, and numerous scientific papers. These covered the whole field of botany.

In 1927, on the basis of his monograph "Sexuality of Cormophytes" he was appointed honorary lecturer in Budapest. The University doctor's degree was conferred to him as early as 1916.

In 1927, he was appointed to lecture botany and organize the Department in the University of Debrecen.

In 1928, the Higher Elementary-School Teachers' Training College from Budapest moved to Szeged and he was appointed to the Chair of Botany.

In 1933, his popular scientific work "The wonderful life of plants", prefaced by FERENC MÓRA, was published, followed in 1935 by his text-book "Introduction to genetics". His first xylotomic paper, entitled "Charcoal remains of the first lowland palaeolithic find", came out in connection with Ferenc Móra's excavations in 1936. In 1939 he demonstrated that in the Magdalenian Period there were living firs and cembra pines in the environment of Szeged. Then in his paper "Pollen-analytical investigations of the mammoth find at Öthalom" (1940) he described, on the basis of spores and pollens, the underwood of these forests as well. This was the first palinological monograph in Hungary to be illustrated with drawings.

In the meantime, while determining several prehistoric wood remains, he realized how difficult it is to identify these. In 1938, as a first trial, he wrote his paper "The determining key to the indigenous deciduous trees in this country on a histological basis". Since then he has dealt more and more with xylotomic investigations. His book "The Identification of Central-European Dicotyledonous Trees and Shrubs Based on Xylotomy" was published in 1945.

This book aroused great interest both in Hungary and abroad, and more and more palaeontologists have turned to him to determine fossilized and carbonized wood remains from Poland, U.S.S.R., Germany, Belgium etc.).

In the determinations, the identification of Pinaceae was particularly problematic because of the lack of any comparative material. He therefore began to deal intensively with the xylotomy of the living Conifers. This was the subject of his academic doctoral dissertation, made in 1955. (Identification of living Gymnosperms on the basis of xylotomy.) This work was later published, and is considered a fundamental text-book all over the world. In Hungary and at the International Book Display in Leipzig it was awarded the title "The most beautiful book of the year".

In 1959 his magnum opus in the domain of the anatomy of European deciduous trees was published in German (Holzanatomie der europäischen Laubbölzer und Sträucher), and received great appreciation. The work containing his original theory was published in a revised form in Hungarian and English, under the title "The phylogeny of sexuality and triphyletic evolution of the landplants" and attracted great attention all over the world.

In 1965 he retired at the age of seventy-five, but has continued to work with unflagging enthusiasm. New monographs were published in rapid succession: in 1967 "Fossil Gymnosperm Woods in Hungary from the Permian to the Pliocene", in 1968 "Xylotomy of the living Cycads" and "Einführung in die Paläoxylotomie", and in 1972 "Xylotomy of the living Conifers". Besides these monographs, he has published many scientific papers in Hungarian and foreign journals.

The wide interests of Professor GREGUSS have included several branches of biological sciences, where he has produced papers of permanent value. For example, he has written 5 papers on natural philosophy (Unity of Nature), 12 on plant physiology, 15 on external morphology, 41 on taxonomy, 3 on plant geography, 12 on phylogenetics, 18 on evolutionary history, 10 on genetics, 58 on palaeontology, 5 on palinology, and 8 on ecology.

The number of his school-books, University text-books and lecture notes are 36. He has performed considerable popularizing work, as well, his papers of such a character numbering 25. The overall number of his works exceeds 300, 25 of these being books.

Professor GREGUSS deservedly enjoys wide-ranging appreciation. In 1956, he obtained the Academic doctor's degree in biological sciences. The Government of the Hungarian People's Republic decorated him with the Gold Order of Labour in 1955, 1959, and 1965, with the Silver Kossuth-Prize in 1958. On two occasions he was Vice-Dean, on one occasion Dean of the Faculty of Science, and on one occasion Rector of the University of Szeged.

He is a honorary member of several Hungarian and foreign scientific societies (International Union of Dendrology, International Society of Taxonomy, International Society of Palaeontology, International Society of Wood-anatomists, International Society of Morphology, German Society of Botany, etc). At present, he is maintaining wide-ranging scientific relations with more than 600 researchers. Hungarian and foreign specialists have named several living or fossil plants after Professor Greguss.

Besides his very considerable scientific and educational activity, Professor GREGUSS has organized the Department of Botany of the University of Szeged and for twenty-five years has reconstructed the Botanical Garden and developed it to high international renown. Many of his several hundred pupils are University and College professors, senior lecturers, Academic Doctors or Candidates in the biological sciences.

DR. IMRE HORVÁTH